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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Israel-Hizbullah Conflict
- [1](#)2. Iran

Key stories in the media:

Major media led with an IDF commando raid on a hospital in the Hizbullah stronghold of Baalbek, in eastern Lebanon's Bekaa valley. Leading media reported that the commandos killed several Hizbullah operatives (according to Ha'aretz, five junior Hizbullah militants) and brought three others to Israel. Israel Radio reported that Hizbullah denied that Israel had captured any of its men, and cited the organization as saying that Israel abducted innocent civilians. Israel Radio said that no Israeli soldiers were hurt.

Leading media reported that an IDF officer and two other soldiers were killed in skirmishes with Hizbullah in the southern Lebanese village of Aita al-Shaab on Tuesday. The media reported that 25 IDF soldiers were wounded in the clashes. This morning, Israel Radio reported that Hizbullah resumed Katyusha rocket fire at northern Israel communities. Maariv quoted a senior IDF source as saying that Hizbullah's capability to fire rockets at Haifa has been critically harmed, although it is not inexistent. Yediot reported that Dr. Mounir Harzallah, a Lebanese physician of Shiite origin, who lived in a small Shi'ite village near the town of Marjayoun in southern Lebanon, sent a letter to the Berlin newspaper Der Tagesspiegel, describing how Hizbullah built a school and a residential building in his village above a storehouse for ammunitions and Katyusha rockets in it. The physician left the village in 2002.

The leading Internet news service Ynet and Israel Radio quoted Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as saying Tuesday on the PBS

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Newshour that a cease-fire could be reached in Lebanon within days. She was quoted as saying: "This week is entirely possible. Certainly we are talking about days not weeks." Rice spoke after meeting with Vice PM Shimon Peres who had said the Israeli military campaign would take "a matter of weeks, not months." Israel Radio noted that this was the first time the US administration was setting a timeframe for a cease-fire. The Jerusalem Post quoted Peres as saying at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy Tuesday that Israel would agree to an immediate cease-fire in Lebanon stopped firing rockets into Israel. The Jerusalem Post said that Peres's statement fell short of the official GOI position. The Jerusalem Post quoted Peres as saying in Washington that Israel was thankful for the United States' supportive position and that he had "only thanks, no criticism" to the US administration. The Jerusalem Post reported that Peres dismissed fears that Syria would act militarily against Israel due to the conflict in Lebanon. He was quoted as saying: "I am not impressed by the Syrian threat. They know the weakness of their army." The Jerusalem Post reported that Peres criticized the insufficient action of the international community on Iran's nuclear project, saying that the "only strength of Iran is the weakness of the international community." The Jerusalem Post reported that Peres was scheduled to meet late Tuesday afternoon with Secretary Rice and with National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley.

All media quoted PM Ehud Olmert as saying Tuesday at the National Defense College that Israel will agree to a cease-fire when conditions are different from those that caused this war to break

out. Olmert was quoted as saying that the face of the Middle East has already changed.

Leading media reported that the EU foreign ministers who met in Brussels Tuesday failed to call for an immediate cease-fire in the Israel-Hizbullah conflict. At the insistence of Britain and Germany, the body instead called Tuesday for an "immediate end to hostilities, to be followed by a sustainable cease-fire." The EU's rotating President, Finnish FM Erkki Tuomioja, was quoted as saying that the Union would not add Hizbullah to its list of terrorist groups. Yediot cited an official Russian list of terrorist organizations in the world, which does not include Hamas or Hizbullah.

Ha'aretz reported that the Rafah crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip remained closed on Tuesday despite Israel's pledge to Secretary Rice that it would be opened for traffic.

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Major media reported that while well-known liberal literary personalities such as Yoram Kaniuk and Yehoshua Sobol support Israel and view the current war as a "war of no choice," 60 young literary personalities this week published a letter calling for an immediate halt to the war in Lebanon. Of the latter group, journalist-author Nir Baram has been most frequently featured on TV talk shows.

Israel Radio reported that a few hundred protesters rallied in front of the US Embassy in Tel Aviv, demanding an immediate cease-fire in Lebanon. The radio also said that several people waved Israeli flags at the site to support the IDF operation.

Yediot reported that France has proposed to the UN Security Council that the two IDF soldiers abducted by Hizbullah be handed to a third party when the cease-fire becomes valid and that that party would retain them until the completion of negotiations over a long-term arrangement in Lebanon. Israel Radio cited the London-based Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat as saying that Egypt has resumed its mediation efforts to reach a prisoner exchange between the Palestinians and Israel. The radio quoted former Palestinian FM Nabil Shaath, an associate of PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas, as saying that the prisoner swap whose possibility was cited on Israel Radio Tuesday could start with the transfer of abducted IDF Cpl. Gilad Shalit to Egypt.

Ha'aretz reported that on Tuesday the High Court of Justice ruled that the right-wing group Temple Mount Faithful can visit the mount on Tisha B'Av, which falls tomorrow. The fast day on the ninth day of the Jewish month of Av commemorates the destruction of both temples.

Major media marked one year since the evacuation of the Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip.

1. Israel-Hizbullah Conflict:

Summary:

Military correspondent Alex Fishman opined on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "In private conversations, our friends from Washington are angry at us, disappointed with us.... Despite this, they still consider us the 'good guys' who are fighting the bad guys."

Senior op-ed writer Uzi Benziman commented in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Even if the balance of this [Israeli military] effort is positive, on the day after the war, the government and IDF chief of staff will have to start preparing -- this time seriously -- for the terror (and nuclear) threats on the horizon."

Military correspondent Danny Shalom wrote in the lead editorial of nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe: "The Americans' patience is wearing thin, and if in the next few days Israel cannot present a tangible, unequivocal achievement, a disappointed Bush will have to instruct

Israel to cease fire."

Ephraim Halevy, former Director of the Mossad, who was National Security Adviser to former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, wrote on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "With Israel by her side, why should [Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice] not sit with the Iranians, who are Hizbullah's real bosses?"

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in Ha'aretz: "A multinational force could mess up Hizbullah's plans to profit from the ruins."

Block Quotes:

I. "End Is in Sight"

Military correspondent Alex Fishman opined on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (8/2): "It is hard to believe, but the end is starting to come into sight. There is a reasonable chance that by the end of the week, a decision on a cease-fire will be made.... This will be a cease-fire of the most fluid and fragile kind. A cease-fire that does not necessarily signal quiet in its first weeks. It will be more of 'freezing a situation of instability' with the potential for an outburst at any given moment. After three weeks of combat, something more definite might have been expected. But this, apparently, is what there is. On Monday, the US administration managed to buy some more time for us, a few more days of combat. The European foreign ministers were about to submit a draft resolution to the Security Council for an immediate and unconditional cease-fire. From Israel's standpoint this is the worst situation. The Americans enlisted the Germans and the British and shot down this resolution. In private conversations, our friends from Washington are angry at us, disappointed with us -- mainly due to the military results that we have achieved so far -- but they are fighting for us tooth and nail. 'Your incompetence will kill us' [written in English in the article] -- this phrase has been heard over the past few days by Israelis who have working ties with White House officials. Despite this, they still consider us the 'good guys' who are fighting the bad guys."

II. "Not Being Prepared"

Senior op-ed writer Uzi Benziman commented in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (8/2): "Ehud Olmert's fatal error occurred when he pushed the all-out war button without being fully cognizant of the IDF's ability to realize its goals. Olmert crashed through the gate that Barak and Sharon refrained from opening. Now he is being dragged after an army that wants to improve its results by means of a major ground offensive. Even if the balance of this effort is positive, on the day after the war, the government and IDF chief of staff will have to start preparing -- this time seriously -- for the terror (and nuclear) threats on the horizon."

III. "The Americans Are Asking: What About the Achievements?"

Military correspondent Danny Shalom wrote in the lead editorial of nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe (8/2): "The IDF received a very long rope during the war with Hizbullah in Lebanon in order to hit the terrorists and to destroy their infrastructure in southern Lebanon. The President of the US, who rejoiced at Israel's aggressive move, decide to grant the IDF an almost indefinite amount of time, but he expected to see results -- perhaps not the elimination of Hizbullah, but critical damage to the terrorist organization, so that this serves as an example to all Muslim terrorist organizations in the world, in particular Al Qaida. But, as it appears on the 22nd day of the war, something went wrong along the way.... The Americans' patience is wearing thin, and if in the next few days Israel cannot present a tangible, unequivocal achievement, a disappointed Bush will have to instruct Israel to cease fire."

IV. "Supping With the Devil"

Ephraim Halevy, former Director of the Mossad, who was National Security Adviser to former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, wrote on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (8/2): "What remains to be done? There are two [possible] moves: One is to enable the IDF to continue the operation and reach a strategic

achievement versus Hizbullah and Iran. The next step is to invite Iran to sit at the negotiating table along with the US and Israel, while Israel strikes at Hizbullah unremittingly. At first, Iran will not want to do so. After all, it would like Israel to disappear from the world map. But the more Iran senses the failure of its strategy, the more likely it is to understand the limits of its strength. Iran's distress is clearly visible; it is currently in danger of taking a major blow to its regional standing and international image. Iran is very sensitive to these aspects.... What is the point of [Secretary of State Condoleezza] Rice discussing matters with Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, who has no power or ability? What real value would an agreement signed by the Lebanese government have? With Israel by her side, why should she not sit with the Iranians, who are Hizbullah's real bosses? And what would we talk about with the Iranians? When we sit opposite one another, it will be hard to begin to cover all the issues on the agenda. But to reach that stage, an IDF success on the battlefield and diplomatic creativity are necessary. Some may say that this is a delusional dream that will never reach fruition; but anyone who believes that a soldier in an international force will disarm a Hizbullah fighter is daydreaming."

IV. "Lahud Fears an International Force"

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in Ha'aretz (8/2): "Currently, the [Lebanese] government does not have the military strength to challenge Hizbullah. Not only is the Lebanese Army too weak militarily, but it is headed by a pro-Syrian commander, Michel Suliman, and even though the chief of staff is a Druze, he is not strong enough to stand up to Suliman. In these circumstances, the proposed international force could function as an alternative national army in addition to its policing duties. Putting French troops into this mix could definitely create problems for Lahud and for Syria, which views France as hostile for sponsoring UN Security Council Resolution 1559.... An overly ambitious multinational force is liable to interfere with Hizbullah's complete control of the civilian population, with its receipt of funds, training camps and, of course, with its weapons stores. This explains Hassan Nasrallah's deep concern for the composition of the multinational force. He does not want his political power to be transferred to the Lebanese government under the umbrella of the multinational force. And he definitely does not want to lose the fat contracts for reconstructing the south, with contributions for it already pouring in from Arab states. Hizbullah owns a huge construction firm that is sure to want the lion's share of the rebuilding projects. To get them, the organization will have to keep away potential competitors, especially companies close to the Beirut government. A multinational force could mess up Hizbullah's plans to profit from the ruins."

12. Iran:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "If, at the end of the day, international diplomacy fails with Iran, the dismantling of Hizbullah's rockets will diminish the risk to Israel's home front in the event of military action aimed at destroying Iran's nuclear facilities."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "It is not too soon for Israel to demand, and for the US to assert, that the next [UN] resolution [regarding Iran] link sanctions to all forms of Iranian international aggression, including support for terrorism."

Block Quotes:

I. "The Iranian Context"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (8/2): "The war in Lebanon has diverted Israeli attention from the important resolution the UN Security Council passed Monday regarding the Iranian nuclear program. Resolution 1696 calls on Iran to stop enriching uranium by

the end of the month, or else face sanctions.... The Security Council decision's timing is significant, coming in the midst of the war between Israel and Hizbullah.... Israel, which sees the Iranian nuclear program as the gravest of threats to its existence and security, must not ignore the connection between the battlefields beyond the Blue Line and the uranium enrichment facilities in Natanz.... The plan being developed for ending the war in Lebanon, which centers around the deployment of a strong multinational force, will be a test of the international community's determination to wrest from Iranian control the outpost Tehran has established among Shiites in Lebanon. And if, at the end of the day, international diplomacy fails with Iran, the dismantling of Hizbullah's rockets will diminish the risk to Israel's home front in the event of military action aimed at destroying Iran's nuclear facilities."

II. "The Great Satan"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (8/2): "On Monday, President George Bush stated categorically, 'Iran must end its financial support and supply of weapons to terrorist groups like Hizbullah. Syria must end its support for terror and respect the sovereignty of Lebanon.' The US is working hard on cobbling together an international force to bring this about. It is somewhat strange, given the current full recognition that Iran is the culprit behind the suffering of so many Israelis and Lebanese, that this week's Security Council resolution on Iran makes no mention of that nation's support for terrorism. This is a worrisome omission. It is inconceivable that Iran could give up its nuclear ambitions and be showered with Western technology and guarantees, without having given up its support for terrorism. Yet this is how the just-passed resolution is constructed. It is not too soon for Israel to demand, and for the US to assert, that the next such resolution link sanctions to all forms of Iranian international aggression, including support for terrorism."

JONES